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AN INSTANCE OF CARRION-FEEDING BY THE
PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*)

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Diet of the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) consists primarily of birds (see Bent 1937; Hickey 1969; Palmer 1988), but predation on mammals has also been observed (Fischer 1968; C. White, pers. comm.). Few reports describe the use of carrion by these falcons (Beebe 1960; Ratcliffe 1980; C. White, pers. comm.), an instance of which I report here. Observations were made on 11–12 July 1988 at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service San Simon field station at Piedras Blancas, San Luis Obispo County, California. Activity was observed from a distance of 114 m with a 60× Bausch and Lomb spotting scope.

A single falcon in juvenile plumage was first seen perched on a telephone pole near the station access road at 0910 H on 12 June. The bird made 5 short (8–10 m height) stoops on the carcass of a juvenile California Ground Squirrel (*Otospermophilus beechyi*) laying in the road. The squirrel was killed by a vehicle at approximately 1730 H on 11 June.

At 0920 H the bird seized the carcass and dragged it to the road's edge, and after a brief pause, moved it off the road. The bird mantled the carcass and began feeding at 0924, making a total of 47 feeding movements in a 3 min period followed by 3 min of inactivity. At 0930 activity resumed and 111 feeding movements were observed in a 25 min period. The bird ceased feeding until 1036, and made another 21 feeding movements before being frightened off the carcass at 1038 by a passing vehicle. The falcon had not returned to the carcass by 1108, at which time the squirrel was collected. The carcass had been

moved 3 m, and the remains weighed approximately 150 g. The head was missing, and most of the pelt in the left axillary area had been removed. Extensive tissue removal was noted from the deltoideus, rhomboideus, triceps and biceps.

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